

THE CATHOLIC RADICAL

“...to foster a society based on creed instead of greed.” Peter Maurin

October/November 2020

Price: For whatever it's worth.

Our Protection Plan

by Claire Schaeffer-Duffy

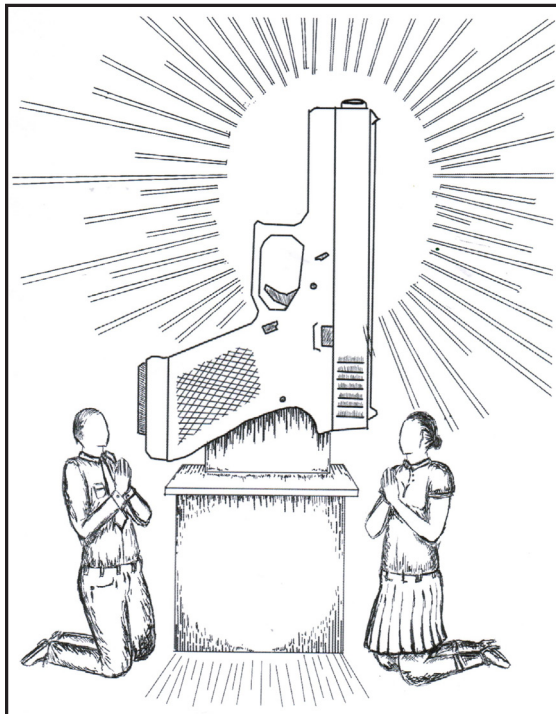
In the quiet towns around me, women are buying guns. The summer turmoil in our cities and calls to de-fund the police sent them rushing to purchase firearms and obtain a License to Carry. Membership in the Massachusetts Women Gun Owners group is up. Even one of our local librarians, and his wife, a customer service rep, are learning how to lock and load. Local firearms instructor Jon Greene told the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette* that in his twenty years of teaching, he had never seen so many applicants for firearms training. “[A] lot of first-timers,” he said, “. . . a lot of women. Good people who are scared” and want guns as part of their “whole protection plan.”

White moms in the burbs are not the only ones packing heat. My friend Kim Williams, at the Catholic Worker in Norfolk, Virginia, says she is seeing a worrisome number of armed people at protests these days, “Antifa, the militias, the police, of course. Even some Black Lives Matter (BLM) activists are calling for folks to ‘get your strap.’” According to the DC-based Brookings Institution, four million guns were sold last June which is 1.4 million more than ordinarily sold during that month.

2020 has admittedly been an unnerving year for people everywhere, yet the rush to purchase firearms is a particularly American expression of panic. In guns, we trust. Guns to assert our agenda abroad and ensure white dominance at home. Guns to protect ourselves, our family,

and property. Guns to delineate gang turf or exact revenge. Guns to entertain. Guns to carry out psychotic fantasies. Guns to commit suicide. Guns to “fix” whatever problem threatens us.

Here at the Catholic Worker, we once



Aiden Duffy

hosted a youth who jiggered his legs incessantly whenever he sat at the kitchen table. He couldn't help it, he told me. Ours is a gun-free home, and he wasn't used to being anywhere without a few weapons strapped to his body. His disarmed state left him feeling anxious. Guns for peace of mind.

There was something piteously terrifying in the reaction of the white St. Louis couple who whipped out weapons

Blessing the Bomb

Father George Zabelka

Editor's Note: George Zabelka, the World War II Catholic chaplain on Tinian, the island from which the US planes Enola Gay and Bockscar left to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki, gave this homily on the 40th anniversary of the atomic bombings. The full text appeared in the Summer 2020 issue of the Norfolk, Virginia Catholic Worker's newsletter Simplicity. In 1988, the Saints Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker brought Father Zabelka to Worcester to support the campaign to remove ROTC military training from the College of the Holy Cross. Father Zabelka died in 1992.

The destruction of civilians in war was always forbidden by the Church, and if a soldier came to me and asked if he could put a bullet through a child's head, I would have told him, “Absolutely not.” That would be mortally sinful. But in 1945, Tinian Island was the largest airfield in the world. Three planes a minute could take off from it around the clock. Many of these planes went to Japan with the express purpose of killing not one child or one civilian but of slaughtering tens of thousands of children and civilians—and I said nothing.

To fail to speak to the utter moral corruption of the mass destruction of civilians was to fail as a Christian and a priest, as I see it. Hiroshima and Nagasaki happened in and to a world and a Christian Church that had asked for it—that had prepared the moral consciousness of humanity to do and to justify the unthinkable.

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Protection

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at the sight of BLM marchers processing down a private street in the gated community where the couple live. Video footage of the march, held last June, shows Mark McCloskey, half ducking behind an enormous column fronting his mansion, his semi-automatic rifle at the ready. Mr. McCloskey's behavior suggests a man under siege. Bullets flying. An assailant around every corner. Except the assailants here are his neighbors, fellow St. Louisans, many of them black. Among the chanting, drumming crowd are clergy, a state representative, a dark-eyed girl with braids. "Get the hell out of my neighborhood!" Mr. McCloskey shouts. From a side entrance to the mansion emerges Mrs. McCloskey thrusting a silver pistol as if anticipating a shoot-out. The scene would be comical, if it weren't so lethal.

"Calm down," shouts someone in the crowd. "Why are you so threatened?" yells another. Watching Mrs. McCloskey wave her pistol at the people streaming down the street (not her lawn), I imagine putting an arm on her shoulder to soothe. *Poor woman, carrying all that fear.*

The gesture would have been risky. Mrs. McCloskey believes in her fears. And her guns. Speaking at the Republican National Convention, she said, "America is such a great country that not only do you have the right to own a gun, but thousands of Americans will offer free advice on **how** to use it."

While gun-rushing in times of crisis may be very American, especially white American, it is neither practical, nor Christian. The moms in quiet towns, adding guns to their "protection plan," have only increased their hazards. Curious toddler. Depressed teen.irate spouse. With a gun in the house, a family member is far more likely to die at the hands of a loved one than an intruder.

No gun can fix what troubles our

beloved homeland. No silver bullet can eradicate the pandemic, end inequity, repair the historical and present-day harms of racism, or reverse our misuse of the planet. Our gravest security threats are communal, not individual. Their remedies require collective action and fearlessness, a realization that we human beings, piteous



Non-Violence, a bronze sculpture by Swedish artist Carl Fredrik Reuterswärd, outside the United Nations Building in New York City.

and vulnerable though we may be, are also made in the image of God. We are capable of just distribution. We can face and repair past harms. We know how to cherish beauty and sacrifice for its preservation. We even have the capacity to embrace our enemies. If we didn't possess such holy urges, why would Jesus risk Himself to our consumption in the Eucharist?

Peace educator Michael Nagler tells this

true story from California. A young man jumped into the car of an elderly woman as she was backing out of the parking lot. "Give me your money," he said pointing a gun to her head. "Young man, Jesus is with me in the car. If you shoot me, I am going straight to heaven, and you are going straight to hell," the woman replied. With that, the conversation became startlingly intimate, the poor guy crying and backing out of the car. Beckoning him back, the woman gave him ten dollars which was all the money she had on her.

"One thing we have in common, as individuals, as human beings, is the power to show love," says Bernard Lafayette, civil rights leader and nonviolence practitioner extraordinaire. Like firepower, using love comes with risk, no doubt, but its effects are vastly different. My prayer this fall is that we make fearless love our protection plan. Ω

"A fearful Christian is a person who has not understood the message of Jesus."

Pope Francis

Vol. 37, No. 2

THE

October/November 2020

CATHOLIC



RADICAL



Published on 100% post-consumer recycled paper every two months by:

The Saints Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker Community

52 Mason Street, Worcester, MA 01610

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Founded in 1933 by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, the Catholic Worker is a lay movement serving the poor while denouncing injustice and proclaiming peace. We are not tax exempt. We rely entirely on the generosity of our supporters to meet our expenses. We welcome volunteers, letters, poetry, articles, artwork, and donations.

We Are One

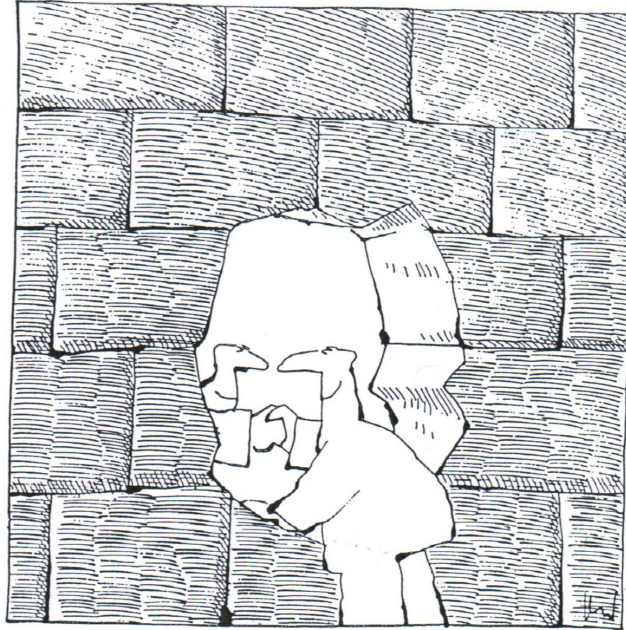
by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

The Gospel reading from today's Mass always bothers me. In Matthew 15, when a Canaanite woman begs Jesus to cure her daughter, he says, **"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."** This I-don't-cavort-with-your-kind insult prompts the woman to reply, **"Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the scraps which fall from their masters' table."** Only then does the nice-guy Jesus take over to say, **"Woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish."**

More typically, Jesus ignores the sharp divisions of his day. He breaks sexist and ethnic taboos by talking with a Samaritan woman in John's Gospel. Matthew has Jesus healing the servant of a Roman soldier, and then praising the man's faith. Mark portrays Christ inviting a tax collector to be an apostle, and Luke shows him eating in the home of a rich man named Zaccheus. Small wonder Saint Paul fought so hard to convince the early Church that Christ's message was for everyone.

And now, with politicians pandering to Hindus in India, Muslims in Turkey, Buddhists in Myanmar, Jews in Israel/Palestine, and with the Chinese ethnically cleansing Uighurs, we face explosive divisions in the United States. Republican/Democrat, left/right, gay/straight, black/white, man/woman, rich/poor, religious/secular, racist/anti-racist, and other labels have us at each other's throats.

On August 14, I heard a *StoryCorps* interview between T. Chick McLure and his father Chas remembering a road trip that healed their 30-year estrangement. The son feared that his very conservative father would never accept him as transgender. But, when they came face to face, the father realized, "You can't abandon your



Len Munnik

family. That's the only link you have to eternity." The son said, "None of us know what kind of time we've got, but I just want to make sure the time we've got is really connected."

As difficult as it is to perceive in today's environment, the MAGA-hat-wearing, NRA-supporting, and maskless shopper at the grocery store is actually a member of our family. A quirky, even confused member, but one who is joined to us at the deepest of levels. Ideologies, left or right, which depersonalize and demonize opponents, do not advance society, they alienate and isolate us.

On October 10, 2014, the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette* ran an obituary of a US army veteran and avid Yankees fan. As a pacifist and Massachusetts native, those are big strikes against him (no pun intended), but the obituary set me straight. It opened with: "Robert Henry 'Peewee' Roche, 80. The man, the myth, the legend, the king of Route 9 stopped aggravating everyone on Tuesday October 7th. He had a long time love affair with humor, music, singing, horse racing, Pringles, root beer, butter, and all types of shenanigans. . . . He took extreme pride in his children. . . ."

When described in this light, Peewee sounds like someone I would really have liked to have known. I suspect we'd feel the same way about everyone if we punched holes in dividing walls to discover the hidden ties that truly bind us together.

Back in my grade school days in the 1960s, we not only read a lot of poetry, we had to memorize much of it. I can still rattle off an enormous quantity of Robert Frost's iambic pentameter. Especially as I move into my sixties, my mind deletes more and more things I once considered important, but, apropos to this article, I still remember one poem that I think expresses a point we all could benefit from in these times of great division.

To Know All Is to Forgive All

by Nixon Waterman

IF I KNEW YOU and you knew me —
If both of us could clearly see,
And with an inner sight divine
The meaning of your heart and mine —
I'm sure that we would differ less
And clasp our hands in friendliness;
Our thoughts would pleasantly agree
If I knew you, and you knew me.

If I knew you and you knew me,
As each one knows his own self, we
Could look each other in the face
And see therein a truer grace.
Life has so many hidden woes,
So many thorns for every rose;
The "why" of things our hearts would see,
If I knew you and you knew me. Ω



the Bomb

(Continued from Page 1)

As a Catholic chaplain, I watched as the B-29 Bockscar, piloted by a good Irish Catholic pilot, dropped the bomb on Urakami Cathedral in Nagasaki, the center of Catholicism in Japan. I knew that Catholic schools, churches, and religious orders were annihilated. And yet, I said nothing.

I never preached a single sermon against killing civilians to the men who were doing it. I was brainwashed! It never entered my mind to protest publicly the consequences of these massive air raids. I was told it was necessary—told openly by the military and told implicitly by my Church leadership. (To the best of my knowledge, no American cardinal or bishop opposed these mass air raids. Silence in such matters is a stamp of approval.)

. . . One would have thought that I would have suggested that, as a minimal standard of Catholic morality, Catholics shouldn't bomb Catholic children. I didn't. I, like that Catholic pilot of the Nagasaki plane, was heir to a Christianity that for seventeen hundred years engaged in revenge, murder, torture, the pursuit of power and prerogative and violence, all in the name of the Lord.

I walked through the ruins of Nagasaki right after the war and visited the place where once stood the Urakami Cathedral. I picked up a censer from the rubble. When I look at it today, I pray God forgives us for how we have distorted Christ's teaching. I was the Catholic chaplain who was there when this grotesque process, begun with Constantine, reached its lowest point—so far.

After the war, I worked with Martin Luther King, Jr. during the Civil Rights struggle in Flint, Michigan. His example, choosing love instead of hate, truth instead of lies, and nonviolence instead of violence, stirred me deeply. This brought me face to face with pacifism—active nonviolent resistance to evil. His words, after he was jailed in Montgomery, blew my mind: "Blood may flow in the streets of

Montgomery before we gain our freedom, but it must be our blood that flows, and not that of the white man. We must not harm a single hair on the head of our white brothers."

I struggled. I argued. But yes, there it was in the Sermon on the Mount, very clear: "Love your enemies. Return good for evil." I went through a crisis of faith. Either accept what Christ said, as silly as it may seem, or deny him completely.



For the past 1,700 years, the Church has not only been making war respectable, it has been inducing people to believe it is an honorable Christian profession. This is not true. This is a lie.

War is now, always has been, and always will be bad, bad news. I was there. I saw real war. Those who have seen real war will bear me out. I assure you, it is not Christ's way. There is no way to conduct real war in conformity with the teachings of Jesus.

The morality of the balance of terrorism is a morality Christ never taught. The ethic of mass butchery cannot be found in the teachings of Jesus. In Just War ethics, Jesus Christ, who is supposed to be all in the Christian life, is irrelevant. He might as well have never existed. In Just War ethics, no appeal is made to Him or His teaching, because no appeal can be to Him or His

teaching in order to determine what level of slaughter is acceptable.

If someone walks into a church and destroys the altar and statues, etc., it is called a sacrilege, the destruction of what is considered holy. But, for the Christian, the ultimate place of the holy is the human person. We are the "temples of the Holy Spirit." Therefore, every act of violence toward a human being is an act of desecration of the temple of God in this world. For the Christian, war is always a sacrilege. There is not such absurdity as a Christian ethic of justified sacrilege.

So the world is watching today. Ethical hairsplitting over the morality of various types of mass slaughter is not what the world needs from the Church, although it is what the world has come to expect from the followers of Christ. What the world needs is a grouping of Christians who will stand up and pay up with Jesus Christ. What the world needs is Christians who, in the language that the simplest soul can understand, will proclaim: "The follower of Christ cannot participate in mass slaughter. He or she must love as Christ loved, live as Christ lived, and, if necessary, die as Christ died, loving one's enemies."

I would like to suggest that there is an immediate need to call an ecumenical council for the specific purpose of clearly declaring that war is totally incompatible with Jesus' teaching and that Christians cannot and will not engage in or pay for it from this point in history on. This would put all nations on notice that, from now on, they are going to have to conduct their mutual slaughter without Christian support—physical, financial, or spiritual.

For 300 years following Jesus' resurrection, the Church universally saw Christ and His teaching as nonviolent. In the face of at least three serious attempts by the Roman state to liquidate her, the Church insisted without reservation that, when Christ disarmed Peter, He disarmed all Christians. Christians believed Christ was their fortress, refuge, and strength. . . . Indeed, this was a new security ethic. When opportunities were given for Christians to appease the state by joining the Roman

army, they were rejected because the early Church saw a complete and obvious incompatibility between loving as Christ loved and killing. It was Christ, not Mars, who gave security and peace.

Today, the world is on the brink of ruin because the Church refuses to be the Church, because we Christians have been deceiving ourselves and the non-Christian world about the truth of Christ. There is no way to follow Christ, to love as Christ loved, and simultaneously kill other people. It is a lie to say that learning to kill is learning to be Christ-like. It is a lie to say that learning to drive a bayonet into the heart of another is motivated from having put on the mind of Christ. Militarized Christianity is a lie. It is radically out of conformity with the teaching, life, and spirit of Jesus.

Now, brothers and sisters, on the anniversary of this terrible atrocity carried out by Christians, I must be the first to say that I made a terrible mistake. I was had by the father of lies. I participated in the big ecumenical life of the Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox churches. I wore the uniform. I was part of the system. When I said Mass over there, I put on those beautiful vestments over my uniform.

As an Air Force chaplain, I painted a machine gun in the loving hands of the nonviolent Jesus, and then handed this perverse picture to the world as truth. I sang "Praise the Lord" and passed the ammunition. As Catholic chaplain for the 509th Composite Group, I was the final channel that communicated this fraudulent image of Christ to the crews of the Enola Gay and Bockscar.

All I can say today is that I was wrong. Christ would not be the instrument to unleash such horror on His people. . . . Excuses and self-justifying explanations are without merit. All I can say is, "I was wrong!" But, if this is all I can say, this I must do, feeble as it is. For to do otherwise would be to bypass the first and absolutely essential step in the process of repentance and reconciliation: admission of error, admission of guilt.

I was there, and I was wrong. Yes, war is Hell, and Christ did not come to justify the creation of Hell on earth by His disciples.

The justification of war may be compatible with some religions and philosophies, but it is not compatible with the nonviolent teaching of Jesus. I was wrong. And to those of whatever nationality or religion who have been hurt because I fell under the influence of the father of lies, I say with my whole heart and soul, "I am sorry. I beg forgiveness."

I asked forgiveness from the Hibakusha (Japanese survivors of the atomic bombings) in Japan last year, in a pilgrimage that I made



Urakami Cathedral, Nagasaki, August 12, 1945

with a group from Tokyo to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I fell on my face there at the peace shrine after offering flowers, and I prayed for forgiveness—for myself, for my country, for my Church. This year in Toronto, I again asked forgiveness from the Hibakusha present. I asked forgiveness, and they asked forgiveness for Pearl Harbor and some of the horrible deeds of the Japanese military. We embraced. We cried. Tears flowed. Pray to God that others will find this way to peace.

All religions have taught brotherhood. All people want peace. It is only the governments and war departments that promote war and slaughter. So, today, again I call upon people to make their voices heard. We can no longer leave this to our

leaders, both political and religious. They will move when we make them move. They represent us. Let us tell them that they must think and act for the safety and security of all the people in our world, not just the safety and security of one country. All countries are interdependent. We can all live together as brothers and sisters, or we are doomed to die together as fools in a world holocaust.

Each one of us becomes responsible for the crime of war by cooperating in its preparation and in its execution. This includes the military. This includes the making of weapons. And it includes paying for the weapons. There's no question about that. We've got to realize we all are responsible. Silence, doing nothing, can be one of the greatest sins.

The bombing of Nagasaki means even more to me than the bombing of Hiroshima. By August 9, 1945, we knew what the bomb would do, but we still dropped it. We knew the agonies and sufferings that would ensue, and we also knew—at least our leaders knew—that it was not necessary. The Japanese were already defeated. They were already suing for peace. But we insisted on unconditional surrender, and this is even against the Just War theory. Once the enemy is defeated, once the enemy is not able to hurt you, you must make peace.

Thank God that I'm able to stand here today and speak out against all war. The Hebrew prophets spoke out against all false gods of gold and silver. Today, we are worshipping a false god of metal, the bomb. We are putting our trust in physical power, militarism, and nationalism. The Bomb, not God, is our security and strength.

The Hebrew prophets said simply: "Do not put your trust in chariots and weapons, but put your trust in God." We must all become prophets. We must all do something for peace. We must stop the insanity of worshipping gods of metal. We must take a stand against evil and idolatry. This is our destiny at the most critical time in human history. But it's also the greatest opportunity ever offered to any group of people in history—to save our world from complete annihilation. Ω

Keep Hope Alive

by Bernard Reese

Houston, we have a problem! America is facing a perfect storm, which many of us have never witnessed in our lifetime. The trifecta of the COVID-19 pandemic, an economy in free fall, and police brutality wreaking havoc throughout our country has pulled back the curtain of racial inequities in our healthcare system and health disparities in black and brown communities. These groups are dying twice as much as white people in America while being further disenfranchised by oppression, racism, and discrimination.

However, today is not the time to plunge into hopelessness but to seek hope amid despair. Hope is an action! Hope without action is merely wishful thinking and will last as long as a snowball in hell!

Many people typically think of hope as a feeling, a wish, or longing for something desirable. Unlike a feeling, a yearning or longing, hope in Jewish and Christian theology implies an expectation of obtaining what is desired.

In Hebrew, hope is the word *tikvah*. **Strong's Concordance** defines it as "a cord and expectation." It comes from the Hebrew root *kavah*, meaning to bind together, collect, expect, tarry, and wait (for, on, upon).

In Greek, hope is the word *elpis*. **Strong's Concordance** defines it as "to anticipate, usually with elation." As a noun, it means "favorable and confident expectation, a forward look with assurance."

The Indo-European root of the word "hope" is the same root from which the word "curve" (to bend) comes. Therefore, the root of the word "hope" gives us the connotation of a change in direction, going differently.



Hope is acting into the change we want to see! Hope is not passive; it does not wish for change. Hope takes place when we can

expect to influence the outcome of the desired end through our actions. In short, hope is a verb, and hope is an action! Hope is having a positive expectation that what you hope for will come to pass as long as you act upon it while you are waiting for your desired outcome to be manifested in the future.

Mahatma Gandhi said, "You must be the change you wish to see in the world."

Mary Beth Owens

Dr. Martin Luther King said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."

Since hope is a verb, and hope is an action, let us act collectively to bend the arc of justice in a more perfect union.

"You should be ashamed to die until you have won some small step for humanity."

—Horace Mann

Let's keep hope alive! Ω

Editor's Note: Bernard Reese, PhD is a diversity inclusion specialist at the Transformative Community Learning Center in Framingham, Massachusetts. He writes and posts spiritual reflections, like this one, every Monday. To see more of his writing or to ask him questions, go to: info@drreesespeaks.org.



Hope

by Alice Walker

Hope never
to covet
the neighbors' house
with the fragrant
garden
from which a family
has been
driven by your soldiers;
mother, father,
grandparents,
the toddler and
the dog
now homeless:
huddled, holding on
to each other,
stunned
and friendless
beneath you
in the street:
sitting on
cobblestones
as if on the sofas
inside
that you have decided
to clean, recover and
keep.
Hope never
to say yes
to their misery.
Hope never to gaze
down into their faces
from what used to be
their rooftop.
Hope never to believe
this robbery
will make you a better
citizen of your new
country
as you unfurl and wave
its recent
flag
that has been given
to assure you
of this impossibility. Ω

Mending Wall

By Robert Frost

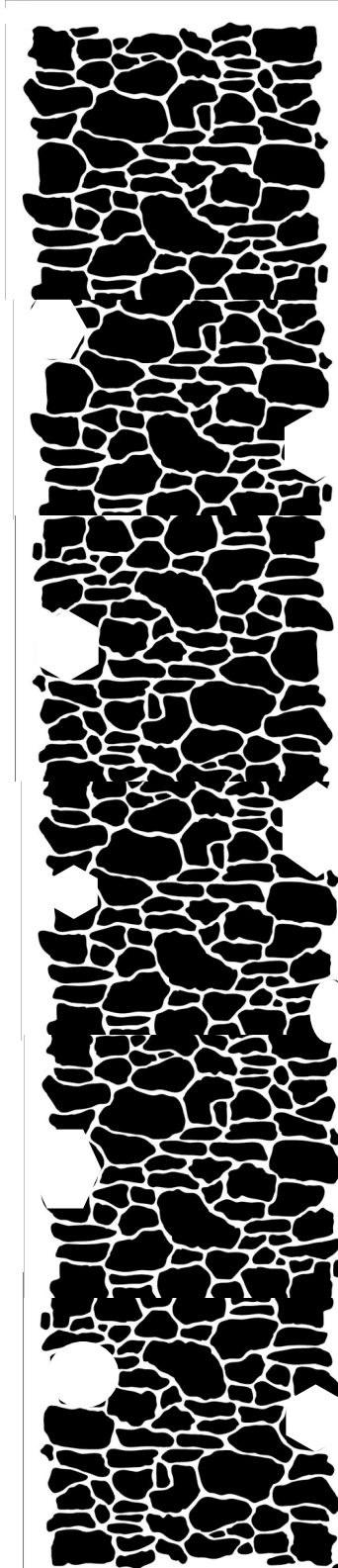
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.
The work of hunters is another thing:
I have come after them and made repair
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,
No one has seen them made or heard them made,
But at spring mending-time we find them there.

I let my neighbor know beyond the hill;
And on a day we meet to walk the line
And set the wall between us once again.
We keep the wall between us as we go.
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.
And some are loaves and some so nearly balls
We have to use a spell to make them balance:
'Stay where you are until our backs are turned!'
We wear our fingers rough with handling them.

Oh, just another kind of out-door game,
One on a side. It comes to little more:
There where it is we do not need the wall:
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
He only says, 'Good fences make good neighbors.'

Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
If I could put a notion in his head:
'Why do they make good neighbors? Isn't it
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offense.

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down.' I could say 'Elves' to him,
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather
He said it for himself. I see him there
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.
He moves in darkness as it seems to me,
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
He will not go behind his father's saying,
And he likes having thought of it so well
He says again, 'Good fences make good neighbors.' Ω



Letters



Dear Scott and Claire,
Much enjoyed the latest *Catholic Radical*. I always learn something from each issue—this time it was about the Pentagon budget. With all the headlines gobbled up by COVID, there's little attention spent on the scandal of our overspending on armaments. Yet, as you point out, so many of our society's ills are a result of the Pentagon draining funding from other critical needs—housing, education, diplomacy, care for the environment, health care, etc.

John Howland, MD
Charlton, Massachusetts

Hi Claire, Scott, and family,
Just reading the Aug-Sept edition of your newsletter. It's always grounding and helps connect me with a spiritual reality for our time.

I loved reading about your garden, Claire! I use the word *veriditas* when I think about and praise God. The greening power of God that runs through us all like green blood! . . . Your writings, hospitality, and faith through the struggle helps us renew our faith and trust in God's word.

Mary Beth Owens
Walpole, Maine

Hey, Scott,
Thanks so much for the copy of *Haunted*. I enjoyed it. . . . I found it interesting and so relevant for today.

Dave Momenec
Milford, New Hampshire

*Editor's Note: Copies of **Haunted: A Catholic Worker Mystery** by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy can still be ordered at 52 Mason Street, Worcester, MA 01610 for \$15 or whatever you can afford.*

Mason Street Musings

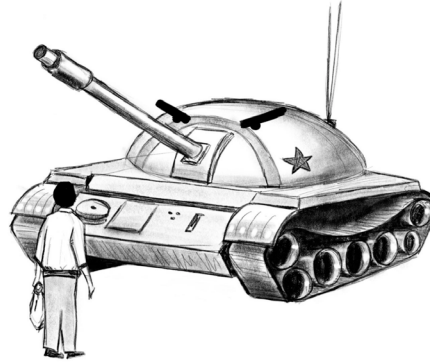
In August, Death Valley, California broke a record with a 130 degree temperature. Since then, devastating forest fires, hurricanes, and floods battered many states. Unless we prioritize addressing the climate emergency, lethal weather catastrophes will become more widespread and more common.

I wish I could say that Saints Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker is 100% carbon-neutral, but it is not. Our passive rooftop solar panels generate 60% of our hot water. Our photo voltaic roof-top panels produce 25% of our electricity. Our hybrid car and greater reliance on walking and biking reduces our annual gas consumption. Insulation and new windows cut our heating bill. Replacing a gas stove and heater on our second floor with a smaller electric stove and high-efficiency heat pumps further reduces our energy use. What electricity we purchase is generated by wind, solar, and hydro.

And yet, our first floor still has gas heat and our hot water back-up system is still powered by natural gas as well. It would

take \$12,000 to replace those systems with heat pumps and at least that much to purchase an electric car. Although, we've made progress, we still have a ways to go.

But, like dieting, quitting smoking, or giving up alcohol, we must not lose hope because our practice is not perfect. My first Communion elated me so much that



I thought I'd never sin again, but I later heard a priest say, "Even saints sin many times a day."

"Whoa!" I thought, "If that's true, why

try to be better?"

But now, I realize that life doesn't differ than much from running, a sport whose participants never accept their achievements as perfect. Personal records fall. And yet, no matter how inferior those new records are compared to Olympians, they matter and encourage endurance.

Eleven years ago, I started running with a jog to the end of Mason Street. I now run thousands of miles a year and am hoping to run my 14th marathon next spring.

Just as a home-made cloth mask, unlike an N-95 respirator, does not provide 100% protection from COVID-19, it still saves lives. CNN reported today that if every American wore a face mask, we could save 70,000 lives over the next four months. If all can do right now to confront the climate emergency is replace a single incandescent light bulb, then do it.

From time to time, a former guest writes to say they've overcome addiction. Some tells us that a single night of hospitality here on Mason Street sparked a life transformation. We never know the impact of tiny gestures.

A car I saw today display the query, "What kind of ancestor am I becoming?" Will our grandchildren look back at our lives with pride? Like the anonymous man who stood in front of a tank in Tianamen Square, we must do what we each can and let go of the results. God waters seeds while we sleep.

Scripture promises us that racism, sexism, militarism, climate change, poverty, disease, and every tear will be wiped away. We have to do our part, but mustn't misconstrue ourselves into saviors. No matter how urgent the crises, we can still take time to laugh and live as if the victory was already achieved. We might even discover that this paradoxical approach gives us an inner calm that increases rather than decreases our effectiveness.

No matter what happens in this turbulent election season, we can each be a light of hope to others. So many of you do this for us. We cannot thank you enough! Ω

Scott

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